



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

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July 5, 2001

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Steve Heminger
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Deputy Director/Operations

Therese W. McMillan
Deputy Director/Policy

Mr. Leslie T. Rogers
Regional Administrator
Federal Transit Administration
201 Mission St #2210
San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear Mr. Rogers,

Please accept this letter as response to the June 16th correspondence to your office from Mr. Piper, representing the Sierra Club (San Francisco Bay Chapter), who questions the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's commitment to public participation, and references Page 31 of the joint FHWA/FTA Final Planning Certification Report for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC).

As you are aware, MTC places a very high priority on an effective and thorough public involvement process. While you have previously received a copy of the final evaluation report of our public involvement process — as required by the Certification Report and detailed on Page 31 — enclosed is an additional copy for your reference.

In addition, MTC's high priority commitment to public participation is further evidenced by the enclosed *Public Outreach and Involvement Program, Phase 1 Summary Report*. The report was presented to our Commission in June 2001 as an element of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) update.

With respect to Mr. Piper's specific complaint on the toll bridge question, and his assertion that our public participation was perfunctory and that its outcome was "foreordained," they are both inaccurate in fact and unfair.

The toll bridge seismic retrofit issue has, for a number of months, been a significant news story portrayed prominently in print, radio and television news media across the entire Bay Area, as well as in statewide and in national news publications. In this highly charged public forum, Legislators, MTC Commissioners and many others have voiced significantly differing opinions on the topic. Also included in this news coverage were full and detailed discussions of MTC staff and consultant materials, pertinent recommendations to the Commission, and times and dates of meetings.

MTC was brought into this issue at the request of members of the State Legislature — in a public hearing covered extensively by the news media — who requested that we take a "second look" at the current cost estimates and work to assist in developing a

solution to this bridge issue this year, which is a tight timeframe given the constraints of the legislative calendar and competing issues during the session

Especially given those considerations, MTC has strived to be open and forthright throughout the bridge toll discussions with all members of the public, particularly in making ourselves completely accessible to the media to keep the public fully informed.

Mr. Piper's thoughtful comments on the toll bridge issue were welcome at the Legislative Committee meeting on June 8th, as were other public comments that the Commission heard at its meeting on June 27th — where a long discussion of the issue was also held.

MTC is committed to an open, innovative public process. We urge Mr. Piper and others to continue to provide their insight in our outreach with the general public.

Sincerely,



Therese W. McMillan
Deputy Director, Policy

Enclosures

cc: Mr. Michael G. Ritchie, FHWA
Robert R. Piper, Ph.D., Sierra Club

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Mr. Michael G. Ritchie
Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
980 Ninth St #400
Sacramento, CA 95814-2724

Dear Mr. Ritchie,

Please accept this letter as response to the June 16th correspondence to your office from Mr. Piper, representing the Sierra Club (San Francisco Bay Chapter), who questions the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's commitment to public participation, and references Page 31 of the joint FHWA/FTA Final Planning Certification Report for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC).

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Sincerely,



Therese W. McMillan
Deputy Director, Policy

Enclosures

cc: Mr. Leslie T. Rogers, FTA
Robert R. Piper, Ph.D., Sierra Club

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June 16, 2001

Mr. Leslie T. Rogers
Regional Administrator
Federal Transit Administration

9

Mr. Michael G. Ritchie
Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
980 Ninth Street, Suite 400
Sacramento, CA 95814-2724

Gentlemen:

Re: Final Planning Certification Report, Metropolitan Transportation Commission

One topic in your report (Page 31) was improvement in the effectiveness of public involvement. An example illustrates that little improvement has taken place.

The MTC Legislation Committee met on June 8, 2001 to act on a staff recommendation regarding funding of the Toll Bridge Seismic Program. The program and its funding trigger great environmental consequences. I attended and registered to comment.

MTC staff and consultants made a long well orchestrated presentation, followed by discussion. A Commissioner moved to adopt the staff recommendation. Most media representatives departed.

Someone then pointed out that members of the public wished to speak to the topic. We were allowed to do so. The original motion was seconded and adopted immediately thereafter.

The public participation was perfunctory. It delayed the foreordained outcome only briefly. Under the circumstances, it did not and could not influence the decision-making.

MTC continues to discourage public involvement rather than solicit it.

We believe that re-certification is unjustifiable unless and until MTC adopts procedures for meaningful public involvement.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert R. Piper, Ph.D.

cc: MTC